

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00
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P 201155Z JUN 78

FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5605

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE PRAGUE 1605

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: EAIR, CZ

SUBJECT: CIVAIR: GOC CLOSES AIRPORT TO PAN AM

REF PRAGUE 1595

1. FOLLOWING UPON THE STILL UNRESOLVED MATTER OF POSSIBLE
133 PERCENT RENT INCREASE ON HOME OF LOCAL PAN AM REPRESENTATIVE
(REFTEL), GOC HAS TAKEN ANOTHER STEP TO WORSEN
OUR CURRENTLY STRAINED CIVAIR RELATIONS.

2. ON SATURDAY, JUN 17, PAN AM REP HAY LEARNED THAT GOC
HAD ISSUED NOTICE TO AIRMEN STATING THAT PRAGUE'S RUZYNE
AIRPORT AND AIR SPACE OVER PRAGUE WOULD BE CLOSED TO CIVIL
AIR SERVICE ON MORNING TUESDAY, JUNE 20. PAN AM'S ONLY WEEKLY
FLIGHT OUT OF PRAGUE (PA 067), OF COURSE, DEPARTS AT 0850
ON TUESDAYS. PAN AM THUS HASTILY HAD TO CANCEL FLIGHT AND
REARRANGE ALTERNATE TRAVEL FOR AS MANY BOOKED PASSENGERS
AS POSSIBLE, INCLUDING TWO DEPARTING EMBASSY FAMILIES WHO
WERE FORTUNATELY ABLE TO LEAVE ON MONDAY ON A LUFTHANSA
FLIGHT. PAN AM, HOWEVER, WAS NOT ABLE TO ASSIST OTHER
PASSENGERS, WHO WERE LEFT STRANDED.

3. DESPITE NOTAM, HAY NOTED TWO CSA AND ONE AEROFLOT FLIGHT

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ARRIVING AND DEPARTING AT RUZYNE TUESDAY MORNING DURING HOURS
AIRPORT WAS ALLEGEDLY CLOSED TO CIVIL FLIGHTS. STRANDED PAN AM
PASSENGERS OF COURSE, NOTED THE SAME THING. WHEN WE LEARNED
OF THIS APPARENT BLATANT DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PAN AM AND OTHER
WESTERN AIRLINES THAT ABIDED BY NOTAM, E/C COUNSELOR CALLED RYCHLIK
OF MFA'S SIXTH DEPARTMENT, TO REGISTER STRONG EMBASSY CONCERN AND
REQUEST EXPLANATION. RYCHLIK PREDICTABLY PLEADED IGNORANCE BUT

PROMISED TO REPORT BACK ONCE HE HAS
"CHECKED INTO MATTER." WE ALSO REMINDED HIM THAT CHARGE RAISED
RENT INCREASE PROBLEM WITH ZANTOVSKY, RYCHLIK'S BOSS, ON JUNE 16
AND THAT WE STILL AWAIT A REPLY.

4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH NO OFFICIAL EXPLANATION HAS BEEN
GIVEN, WE BELIEVE RUZYNE WAS CLOSED EITHER BECAUSE OF MILITARY
OPERATIONS OR ARRIVAL OF LIBYAN LEADER QADHAFI OR BOTH.
WHATEVER REASON, GOC ACTION FORCING PAN AM TO CANCEL ITS WEEKLY
FLIGHT, THUS LOSING BADLY NEEDED REVENUE AND INCURRING EXTRA
EXPENSES IN HANDLING ITS STRANDED PASSENGERS, WHILE EVIDENTLY
ALLOWING CSA AND AEROFLOT TO CONTINUE OPERATIONS COMES AT
VERY BAD TIME. HAY AND OTHER PAN AM OFFICIALS ARE STILL
UNDERSTANDABLY ANGRY ABOUT RENT HIKE AND OTHER
GOC-GENERATED PROBLEMS. AS HAS BEEN POINTED OUT EXPLICITLY TO
RYCHLIK AND ZANTOVSKY, THESE PROBLEMS MAY WELL PUSH PAN AM INTO
AN EARLY CANCELLATION OF ITS PRAGUE SERVICE AND AN OPEN
HOSTILITY TOWARD ANY AIR TRANSPORT AGREEMENT WITH GOC.
DECONTROL ONE YEAR AFTER RECEIPT.
BYRNE

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